

enough to act without the other. If the King had enforced the statute against provisions, the Pope would have lost his hold on the patronage. On the other hand, if the Pope's support had been withdrawn from the royal nominees, the Church in England might have ventured to reject them. In 1360 the Black Prince and his father obtained a bishopric for a man unable even to read his letters, by persuading the Pope to approve the appointment, against his own better judgment and the will of the English Primate.¹

The King's candidates were generally selected from his staff of civil servants, the 'clerks' who had carried on the business of the country with success and honesty, and risen at Westminster by their talents and diligence. Hence, though the Bishops were likely to be neither fools nor knaves, they were still less likely to be saints. William of Wykeham, though perhaps above the average of his brother Bishops, is thoroughly typical of them. He rose by Court favour on account of his abilities and his public services. As his usefulness to the King increased, he was promoted from one benefice to another.² His work was not to preach in the one rectory or sing in the many stalls that he held, but to build the King's castle at Windsor and to sum his accounts in the chambers of the Palace. Finally, he crowned his double career by becoming Chancellor of England and Bishop of Winchester in the course of one month. A diligent inquiry shows that, out of twenty-five persons who were Bishops in England or Wales between 1276 and 1386, as many as thirteen held high secular offices under the Crown, and several others played an important part in politics. Sometimes they were sent abroad as ambassadors to foreign Powers;³ Others had risen by favour, not of the King, but of one of his sons. The Bishop of Bath and Wells had been private chaplain to the Black Prince, and had served him as Chancellor of Gascony.⁴ The Bishop of Salisbury was similarly attached to John of Gaunt, and served him as Chancellor of Lancaster.⁵

¹ *Diet, of Na>t. JBiog.*, under Stretfcou.

" Moberfy's *Ltife of Wykeli&m; Neve's Pasti*, pasaizn*

* Higher*, ix. 24.

* Nicolas, *Hist. Peerage*, sub Bjsps. of Bath. *JaT«*&. Jfccc. An\$«, 655,